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# The Gettysburg National Military Park: Essential Education Field Trip

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# **The Gettysburg National Military Park: Essential Education Field Trip**

**by**

**Ronald G. Helms, Ph.D., Professor**

## **Introduction**

“Social Studies teachers examine the restored flag of the 83rd Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, present on July 2, 1863 at the heroic defense of Little Round Top in the Battle of Gettysburg.”

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/social\\_studies/476](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/social_studies/476))

This example provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education Social Studies Classroom of the Future documents the fundamental importance for Pennsylvania teaching candidates, in-service teachers (from the nation), students and the general public to visit The Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center

<http://www.nps.gov/gett/>).

The Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center is one of Pennsylvania’s and the nation’s premier historical sites. Teaching candidates and in-service teachers should prepare by visiting The Gettysburg National Military Park Museum website and navigate to the “For Teachers” page. This vital page includes all the preparations necessary for a successful visit to The Gettysburg National Military Park

Museum and Visitor Center: Plan A Field Trip, Curriculum Materials, Professional Development, Traveling Trunks, and Suggested Reading.

Time, continuity and change is the NCSS standard that many social studies educators apply to the study of the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863). The complexities of the Battle of Gettysburg (the turning point of the Civil War) and with casualties estimated between 46,000 and 51,000 have been and will continue to be a major source of historical study for students and citizens of the United States

(<http://americancivilwar.com/getty.html>). Nearly 650,000 American soldiers died as a result of the Civil War.

An actual teaching unit on the Battle of Gettysburg or a secondary or university course on the Battle of Gettysburg and the Civil War will demonstrate that all ten NCSS standards (Culture; Time, Continuity, and Change; People, Places, and Environment; Individual Development and Identity; Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; Power, Authority, and Governance; Production, Distribution, and Consumption; Science, Technology, and Society; Global Connections; Civic Ideals and Practices) apply to this brief time period (<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards>.)

The Pennsylvania social studies standards are based on the current NCSS standards, and in several instances the Pennsylvania standards directly match the NCSS standards. In some instances, Pennsylvania social studies methods professors must take care to connect the NCSS standard with the Pennsylvania standard.

**NCSS standards with Pennsylvania standards co correlations**

- 1.1 Culture (PA. Standard I.G. Sociology and I.E. Anthropology)
- 1.2 Time, Continuity, and Change (PA. Standard I.A. History)
- 1.3 People Places, Environments (PA. Standard I.B. Geography)
- 1.4 Individual Development and Identity (PA. I.F. Psychology)
- 1.5 Individual, Groups, Institutions (PA. Standard I.G. Sociology and I.E. Anthropology)
- 1.6 Power, Authority and Governance (PA. Standard I.C. Civics and Government)
- 1.7 Production, Distribution & Consumption (PA. Standard I.D. Economics)
- 1.8 Science, Technology, and Society (PA. Standard I.A. History and I.D. Economics)
- 1.9 Global Connections (PA. Standard I.A. History and I.F. Psychology)
- 1.10 Civic Ideals & Practices (PA. Standard I.C. Civics and Government)

Because Pennsylvania social studies teaching candidates and in-service social studies teachers are required to take courses in the history of Pennsylvania, the history of the U.S. (including the Civil War and Gettysburg), it is beyond the scope of this article to review the specific history of Gettysburg. One might assume that if Pennsylvania social studies methods professors are teaching national and state standards that Pennsylvania social studies teaching candidates and in-service social studies teachers have the skills that are necessary to correlate national and state standards concerning The Battle of Gettysburg.

Pennsylvania social studies teaching candidates and in-service social studies teachers who have content mastery as well as a competent university social studies methods professor will be able to determine which aspects of the The Battle of Gettysburg

correlate with the Pennsylvania social studies standards: I.A. History, I.B. Geography, I.C. Civics and Government, I.D. Economics, I.E. Anthropology, I.F. Psychology, and I.G. Sociology. Any given social studies lesson may involve several of these objectives, and candidates and teachers must continue to recognize that teaching The Battle of Gettysburg is a prime example of a teaching unit that utilizes all Pennsylvania social studies standards. Adequate university social studies methods courses and continuing social studies in-service programs such as those offered by various Teaching American History grants will reinforce Pennsylvania social studies standards.

While many Pennsylvania social studies standards are clear to social studies teaching candidates and in-service social studies teachers, standard I.F. Psychology may require several teaching examples. One of many of these examples is that General Lee suffered ill health prior to and during The Battle of Gettysburg. The heart disease may have impacted Lee's psychological judgment. The loss of southern generals such as Stonewall Jackson may have impacted Lee's psychological judgment. Lee psychologically may have looked to Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz as a guiding light.

### **The Teaching American History Grant: The Gettysburg National History Park**

The Gettysburg National Military Park (<http://www.nps.gov/gett/>) is a critical visit and experience for educators and for students. It seems amazing that school groups will set their sites on Washington, D.C. or Williamsburg with little knowledge of the geography of Gettysburg. These historical areas are one hour and thirty minutes apart or nearly 86 miles.

In addition to WWW resources, all teachers were provided the following guides:

National Park Civil War Series (1994). *The Battle of Gettysburg*, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior (1998). *Gettysburg – Official Map and Guide*, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior: *A Field Trip Guide for Educators – The Battle of Gettysburg*.

To teachers and students who may envision the Battle of Gettysburg, the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle Verdun, the Battle of the Marne, the Battle of Midway, the Battle of Yorktown, the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the Battle of New Orleans as a confusion of dates, enemies, and time, that is to be memorized and forgotten, teaching history requires more than reading a few pages, PowerPoint presentations, and lectures. The Battle of Gettysburg has important focal points: Little Round Top, the Wheatfield, Devil's Den, the Peach Orchard, Culp's Hill, Pickett's Charge, Cemetery Hill, Cemetery Ridge, Seminary Ridge, a cast of leading generals, and statistics that may seem arcane to both teacher and student.

Active learning strategies which follow the Dewey tenet of “learning by doing” applies to a field trip to Gettysburg. The NCSS and many states social studies standards clearly mandate the value of field trips. The Ohio Department of Education (2) Academic Content Standards for K-12 Social Studies provides for the importance of field trips:

Whenever possible, students should have opportunities to learn social studies in real-world contexts. They should be able to examine artifacts, read primary source

materials, engage in authentic experiences and take field trips. Research shows that learning is enhanced when students make meaningful connections between new information that they are learning and their own experiences. Combining social studies instruction with the study of other disciplines, such as art and literature, helps to reinforce the learning within each discipline. It also helps the students to develop conceptual frameworks that lead to broader understandings.

### **The Gettysburg National History Park: Planning and Experiencing**

In planning a field trip to Gettysburg, allow for one – three days of actual 9:00AM – 7:00PM touring. There are 34 plus hotels and motels, 33 plus Bed and Breakfasts, and 25 plus restaurants. Several of the “tavern dining inns” may add a to this unique visit (<http://www.gettysburg.travel/visitor/index.asp>.) This same WWW site provides a number of historical package visits for those who prefer to leave the planning to others; visit [http://www.gettysburg.travel/visitor/ps.asp?ps\\_category\\_id=280](http://www.gettysburg.travel/visitor/ps.asp?ps_category_id=280) for more information.

The \$915,000.00 Dayton Teaching American History project legacy website at [http://www.dps.k12.oh.us/academic/secsoc/americanhistory/teaching\\_01.htm](http://www.dps.k12.oh.us/academic/secsoc/americanhistory/teaching_01.htm) provides numerous U.S. history lessons and while the specific lesson is developed for grade 8, this lesson plan is easily modified for several different grades. By selecting Unit 8, The Civil War, teachers will receive a five-day lesson plan.pdf. This specific unit encourages the



use of many appropriate WWW sites, and all the sites and lesson plans have been carefully field-tested.

TeachingAmericanHistory.org (<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/tahgrants/>) is a listing of the many TAH projects that have constructed web sites for teachers. Many of these web sites will provide lessons for teaching about the Battle of Gettysburg. In preparing for the Dayton teachers to journey to Gettysburg, the teachers were required to review the available lessons and to begin construction of their own Battle of Gettysburg teaching unit. The curriculum materials include the following:

#### Learning Activities

1. Choose and develop a character.(pdf- 24.9k)
2. What would you do, stay or flee? (pdf- 28.4k)
3. "A new birth of freedom."? (pdf- 14.1k)
4. Long Remember- Postwar (pdf- 11.6k)

#### Resources

1. African American Bios. (pdf-19k)
- 2-4. Supplementary Material. (pdf-29k)
5. Mag Palm Account. (pdf-112k)
6. The Gettysburg Address. (pdf-12k)
7. Lincoln on Race Relations. (pdf-12k)
8. Reactions to the Gettysburg Address. (pdf-21k)
9. Contemporary Views of the Lincoln Administration. (pdf-20k)

10. Worksheet. (pdf-13k)
11. Grave diggers at Gettysburg (photo; pdf-43k)
12. Basil Biggs and wife (photo; pdf-69k)
13. Owen Robinson (photo; pdf-66k)
13. John Hopkins (photo; pdf-32k)

While there are several options for touring the Gettysburg National Military Park, it is important to have a plan unless the teacher cohort is accompanied by a Gettysburg historian. Experience recommends some initial time at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor's Center, to view the film "A New Birth of Freedom, " and to View the Gettysburg Cyclorama program.

An essential factor in an education tour is to employ a Licensed Battle Field Guide (<http://www.nps.gov/gett/planyourvisit/feesandreservations.htm>.) The fee is extremely reasonable given the knowledge and personal attention that the Licensed Battle Field Guides provide.

### **The Gettysburg National History Park: Conclusion**

One of the most important historical sites in the nation is the Gettysburg National Military Park located near Gettysburg, PA. Numerous Teaching American History Grants have the economic resources to bring teachers to the Gettysburg National Military Park. The Gettysburg National Military Park is about one and one-half hour from

Washington, DC and is centrally located to millions of Americans. The following illustrates some selected driving distances to Gettysburg: New York City – 206 miles; Philadelphia – 118 miles; Trenton – 149 miles; Chicago – 640 miles; Columbus, OH – 348 miles; Baltimore – 54 miles; Washington -78 miles.

Gettysburg National Military Park is within a day's drive of nearly one-half of the U.S. population. A visit to Gettysburg National Military Park and its history must be planned and savored. A visitor has little to gain by aimlessly driving through the park. America's children and students must experience the importance of the history of Gettysburg National Military Park. This author highly recommends the Licensed Battle Field Guides in small groups for the most engaging history of the Gettysburg National Military Park.

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TeachingAmericanHistory.org Retrieved December 20, 2008 from

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